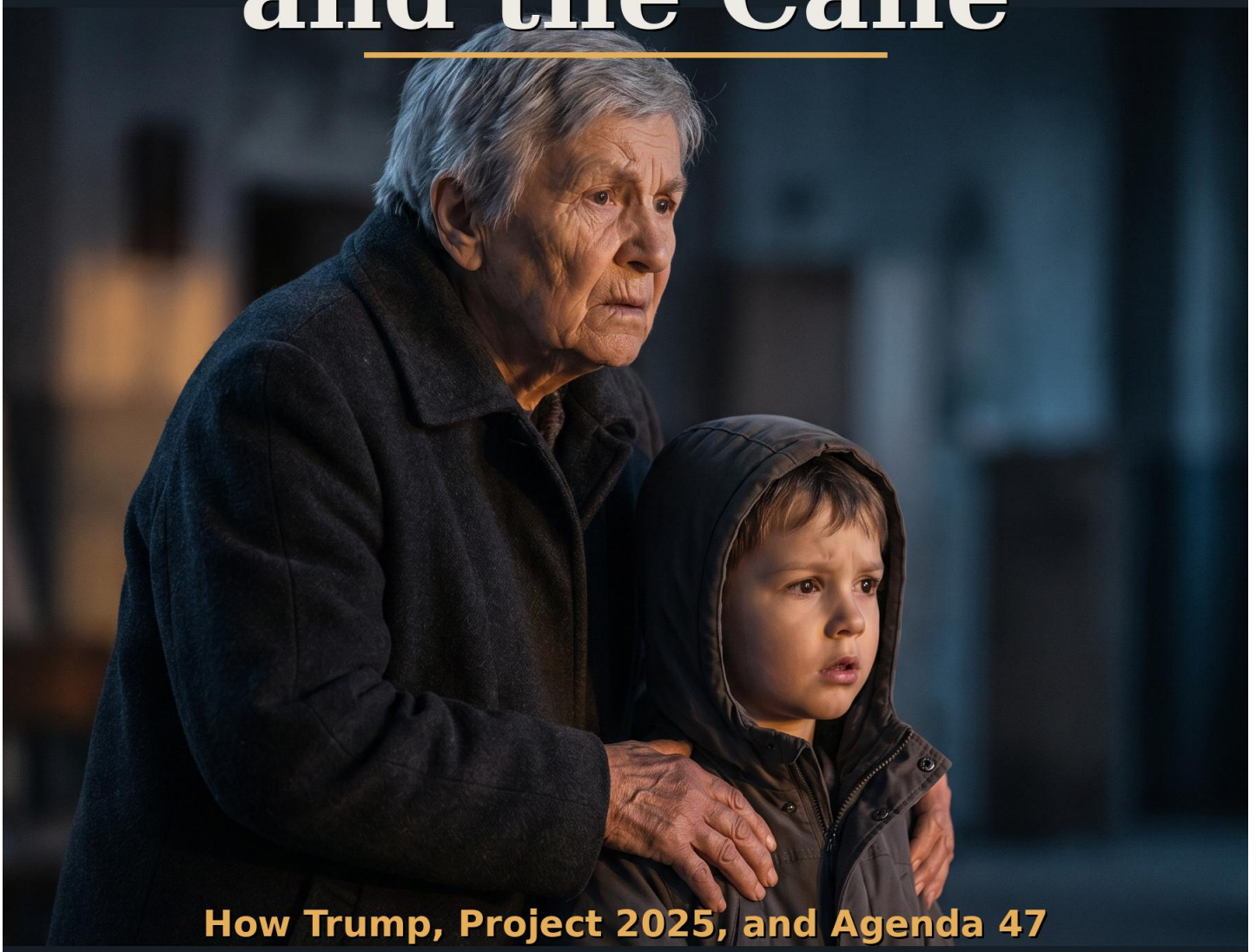
When They Come for the Cradle and the Cane



How Trump, Project 2025, and Agenda 47 Betray Children, Elders, and the Future

Measured Against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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How Trump, Project 2025, and Agenda 47 Betray Children, Elders, and the Future — Measured Against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

INTRODUCTION: Why This Matters to Us All

The autumn sunlight streamed through the floor-to-ceiling windows of a continuing care retirement community café in suburban Maryland. An eighty-four-year-old resident sat with her laptop, preparing her weekly column for the community newsletter. Her nine-year-old granddaughter had just sent a video message: "Grandma, why is Daddy having to work two jobs now? Mom cried yesterday about money."

Scenes like this are playing out in retirement communities across America. Residents who thought they had done everything right — who believed the promise that hard work and saving would provide security — are watching that promise crumble, not just for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren. And at the same time, in their own lives, the supports they counted on for their final years are being pulled away: the Medicaid that pays for the nursing home down the hall, the Social Security check that arrives on the third of the month, the aide who was supposed to help with medications.

This book exists because of questions like that granddaughter's, and because of a harder question the elders themselves are now asking: *Did we come this far, only to have it taken back at the end?*

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, represents humanity's collective commitment to the principle that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. It establishes that these are not privileges to be granted or withdrawn by governments based on politics, but fundamental rights that belong to every human being. For seventy-five years, the United States presented itself as a guardian and defender of these principles. Older Americans remember when that was true. Many of them were young adults when the Declaration was adopted. Many fought in or lived through World War II. Many worked through the Civil Rights era, when America made a national commitment not to discriminate based on race, religion, or national origin.

Something fundamental has shifted. The policies enacted by the second Trump administration in 2025 and 2026, drawn substantially from the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 blueprint and Donald Trump's own Agenda 47 campaign platform, represent not isolated disagreements about the size of government but a systematic departure from the foundational commitment to human dignity that has guided civilized nations since the Holocaust taught the world what happens when governments abandon that responsibility.

This is a work of documented fact. Where the earlier edition of this book used fictional composite characters to illustrate its themes, this edition replaces them with real, named people whose stories were reported by ProPublica, CNN, The Washington Post, The New York Times, the Boston Globe, and others, and verified against primary sources. Every major factual claim carries an in-line reference at the end of its section. The names are real. The numbers are current as of mid-2026. The harm is not hypothetical.

The chapters that follow examine three groups of victims. Part One documents the cruelty toward **children** — family separation, the stripping of healthcare and nutrition, the dismantling of public education, and the collapse of maternal care under abortion bans. Part Two turns to **elders** — the assault on Medicaid long-term care, the automatic cuts triggered against Medicare, the gutting of the Social Security Administration, the expiration of health insurance subsidies for older adults, and the elimination of the agencies that feed and protect the aged. Part Three considers **our shared future** — the retreat from climate protection, the erosion of voting rights and the rule of law, the flight of scientists, and the mountain of debt being handed to generations not yet born.

Each represents a violation of specific provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Each harms real people. And the question that runs through all of them is the same: what kind of nation turns first against its children and its elders — the two groups least able to defend themselves?

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- Project 2025 as a Heritage Foundation transition program built around a 920-page *Mandate for Leadership*; Agenda 47 as Trump's official 2024 campaign platform, separate from Project 2025 — USA Today, "Trump's Agenda 47, Project 2025"; Center for Progressive Reform, "One Year of Project 2025"

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: Our Shared Commitment

Before we can measure any government's policies against human rights standards, we need to understand what those standards actually are.

On December 10, 1948 — three years after the Holocaust ended and the world confronted the horrors of what happens when governments abandon responsibility for human dignity — the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was not a partisan document. It represented the consensus of nations still reeling from World War II, united in the determination that such atrocities would never happen again.

The Declaration begins with a simple, powerful statement: *"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."*

This is **Article 1.** Not a privilege. Not something earned or conditional. A fundamental fact: human dignity is inherent, equal, and universal.

The Declaration then establishes thirty articles protecting specific rights. Those most relevant to the harms documented in this book include:

- **Article 2** prohibits discrimination based on "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national origin, property, birth or other status."
- **Article 3** guarantees "the right to life, liberty and security of person."
- **Article 5** declares that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."
- **Articles 6–11** guarantee legal recognition, equal protection under law, an effective remedy, freedom from arbitrary arrest, and the right to a fair hearing.
- **Article 14** establishes that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."
- **Article 16** protects the right to marry and found a family, and declares the family "the natural and fundamental group unit of society... entitled to protection."
- **Article 21** protects the right to take part in government, "directly or through freely chosen representatives," through "periodic and genuine elections" by "universal and equal suffrage."
- **Article 22** establishes the right to social security.

- **Article 25** declares that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, **old age** or other lack of livelihood." It further states that "motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance."
- **Article 26** establishes that "everyone has the right to education," which "shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages."
- **Article 27** protects the right "to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."
- **Article 28** states that "everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized."

These are not revolutionary demands. They are basic. They protect children, families, the sick, the old, and democracy itself. Article 25 is unusual among the world's founding rights documents in that it names *old age* explicitly, and names *motherhood and childhood* as deserving special care. The United States helped write these words. Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the drafting committee. Seeing them systematically dismantled represents a profound moral betrayal — and, measured article by article, a documented one.

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PART ONE: THE CRUELTY TOWARD CHILDREN

The Foundation: Why Children Matter Most

When we evaluate a society — when we judge its morality and its alignment with human rights principles — we should look first at how it treats children. Children cannot vote. They cannot advocate for themselves. They have no power to defend their interests. A society that protects its children is a society committed to human dignity. A society that sacrifices children for political ends is a society that has abandoned its foundational principles.

The Universal Declaration does not devote a separate article to "children's rights," but its guarantees of life, freedom from torture, family unity, education, healthcare, and an adequate standard of living all apply with special force to children — and Article 25 names "childhood" as "entitled to special care and assistance." The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 and ratified by every country in the world except the United States, explicitly recognizes that children have rights and that governments have special obligations to protect them.

The policies documented in this Part violate these principles in ways that cause severe, lasting harm to children. This is not a matter of opinion. It is medical, psychological, and legal fact.

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CHAPTER 1: FAMILY SEPARATION AND THE TRAUMA OF ENFORCED ABANDONMENT

Carlos, and a family of five

In June 2025, a Guatemalan teenager named Carlos was detained by immigration authorities after a traffic stop in Florida. His guardian's fiancé had already been deported. Carlos was placed in a government shelter, one of hundreds of children swept into federal custody that year. In South Carolina, a Colombian family of five was separated; the children — ages five, eleven, and fifteen — were held for four months. These are not composites. They were documented by name and circumstance in ProPublica's investigation of the 2025 detention system.

The pattern is deliberate. During 2025, roughly **600 immigrant children** were placed in government shelters after being separated or referred by Immigration and Customs Enforcement — a figure ProPublica reported was "higher than the tally for the previous four years combined" and the highest since recordkeeping began a decade earlier. The average length of a child's stay in Office of Refugee Resettlement care rose from about

35 days in October 2024 to roughly **185 days** — six months — by November 2025. Roughly 3,000 people were arrested in 2025 in operations that targeted the caregivers and sponsors of these very children, and Homeland Security Investigations arrested more than 450 sponsors, deterring relatives from coming forward to claim children and prolonging the children's detention.

This is the second time a Trump administration has done this at scale. The first, in 2017–2018, forcibly separated more than 4,600 children from their parents under the "zero tolerance" policy.

What the science says

The earlier edition of this book stated that "100 percent of separated children developed PTSD." The truth is more specific and, in its way, more damning. Physicians for Human Rights conducted clinical evaluations of 17 adults and 9 children who had been separated at the border. It found that **most** of them met the diagnostic criteria for at least one mental health condition — post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, or generalized anxiety disorder. PHR's conclusion was unambiguous: the separations constituted "cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and, in all cases evaluated by PHR experts, constitute torture."

A separate 2019 study led by Dr. Sarah MacLean at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai found that **detained children have twice the rate, and separated children three times the rate**, of severe emotional or behavioral difficulties compared with the baseline U.S. child population. (The original edition mistakenly

attributed this finding to the University of Illinois; the correct source is the Mount Sinai team.)

The trauma does not end at the shelter door. A September 2024 analysis of 314 complaints from children ages 5 to 17 held in Border Patrol custody found that **1 in 10 experienced physical abuse** and **nearly 4 in 10 experienced verbal abuse**. Some of the children were as young as five.

The human rights violation

Article 5 of the Universal Declaration prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment — the precise language Physicians for Human Rights used to describe these separations. Article 16 protects the family as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society." Article 3 guarantees the liberty and security of person. And Article 14 protects the right to seek asylum — a right the United States is legally bound to honor and that these enforcement operations systematically obstructed. To separate a five-year-old from her mother, to hold her for six months, to let her be handled roughly by armed agents, is not border security. It is, in the clinical judgment of the physicians who examined its victims, torture.

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- ~600 children referred by ICE to ORR in 2025; ~3,000 caregiver arrests; 450+ sponsor arrests; average care 35→185

days; 4,600+ separated in first Trump term — KIND, Family Separation Policy Brief (Jan. 2026)

- "Most" of 9 children met mental-health criteria; "torture" conclusion — Physicians for Human Rights, "You Will Never See Your Child Again" (2020)
- Detained children 2x, separated children 3x rate of severe emotional/behavioral difficulty; MacLean et al., Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai — USCRI Policy and Advocacy Report
- 1 in 10 physical abuse, nearly 4 in 10 verbal abuse among 314 children in Border Patrol custody — Florence Project & ImmDef, "Handcuffed, Pushed, and Afraid" (Sept. 2024)

CHAPTER 2: STRIPPING HEALTHCARE FROM CHILDREN

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), the reconciliation law that reshaped the federal safety net. Its Medicaid provisions are the largest cut to the program in its sixty-year history.

The Congressional Budget Office and the Kaiser Family Foundation estimate that OBBBA reduces federal **Medicaid spending by about $911 billion over ten years**; counting the Children's Health Insurance Program, the Center for American Progress puts the combined benefit reduction at roughly **$1.02 trillion**. (An earlier draft of this book cited "$940 billion"; the verified CBO/KFF figure is $911 billion for Medicaid alone.) The CBO projects that about **10 million people will lose coverage** from the Medicaid provisions — a figure that rises to 16 million when the

simultaneous expiration of Affordable Care Act subsidies is included.

Children are not incidental to this. Nearly **four in ten children in the United States are covered by Medicaid or CHIP**. When states absorb the loss of federal dollars, they cut eligibility, add paperwork requirements, and reduce provider payments — and children are among the first to fall through the resulting gaps.

RFK Jr. and the machinery of public health

On February 13, 2025, the Senate confirmed Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as Secretary of Health and Human Services by a vote of 52 to 48. Kennedy, the nation's most prominent vaccine skeptic, now presides over the agencies that protect children's health — a fact whose consequences appear again in the chapters on measles and vaccine policy.

Special education and the children left behind

In the 2022–23 school year, about **7.5 million students** ages 3 to 21 — roughly 15 percent of all public school students — received special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. These are children with autism, learning disabilities, speech impairments, and physical disabilities whose access to education depends on federal enforcement of their rights. As Chapter 4 documents, the administration's dismantling of the Department of Education threatens the very office charged with protecting them.

Reproductive and family-planning care

On April 1, 2025, the administration withheld fourth-year funding from 16 of 86 Title X family-planning grants, freezing $65.8 million that supports contraception, cancer screening, and reproductive care for low-income patients; the funds were later restored in January 2026, but the administration's FY2026 budget proposed eliminating the $286 million program entirely.

The human rights violation

Article 25 declares the right to "medical care and necessary social services" and singles out "motherhood and childhood" for "special care and assistance." A nation that removes health coverage from millions of children, while cutting the programs that screen them for disability and treat their families, is not economizing. It is withdrawing from a commitment the Declaration treats as fundamental.

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- RFK Jr. confirmed HHS Secretary Feb. 13, 2025, 52–48 — The Guardian, "RFK Confirmed"
- 7.5 million students under IDEA, ~15% of public-school students — NCES, "Students With Disabilities"

- Title X: 16 of 86 grants / $65.8M withheld Apr. 1, 2025, restored Jan. 2026; FY26 proposal to eliminate $286M program — KFF, "The Latest Challenge to the Title X Safety Net"

CHAPTER 3: TAKING FOOD FROM CHILDREN'S TABLES

The largest SNAP cut in history

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — food stamps — feeds about **42 million people** in an average month, and children make up roughly **34 to 40 percent** of participants. (An earlier version of this book described children as "nearly half" of recipients; that was true a generation ago, but the child share has fallen as the program has aged.)

OBBBA cut SNAP by roughly **$187 billion over ten years** — not the $120 billion cited in the earlier draft, but far more. The CBO estimates the law will reduce SNAP participation by about 2.4 million people per month, and that roughly 4 million people, including about **1 million children**, will see their benefits cut or eliminated in an average month.

What is already happening

This is not a forecast. It is a measured decline. By June 2026, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that **808,000 children had stopped receiving SNAP since July 2025** across 13 states, as total participation fell by more than 4 million — about 10 percent. ProPublica's analysis of 12 states found that children accounted for 46 percent of the decline — 776,134 of

them. Nearly half of the people losing food assistance under the new law are children.

The human rights violation

Article 25 names "food" as the first element of an adequate standard of living and specifies that children are entitled to special care. Hunger is not an abstraction for a child; it shows up in classroom concentration, in emergency-room visits, in stunted growth. To remove food assistance from a million children as a budget offset is to trade their nourishment for a line in a ledger.

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- OBBBA SNAP cut ~$187B; ~2.4M/month participation drop; ~4M (incl. ~1M children) lose/reduce benefits — Penn LDI, "SNAP Food Cuts"; NAACP LDF, "OBBBA Explained"
- 808,000 children off SNAP since July 2025 across 13 states — Common Dreams / CBPP, "SNAP Participation"
- 776,134 children = 46% of decline in 12 states — EJI / ProPublica, "Nearly Half Who Lost SNAP Are Children"

CHAPTER 4: DISMANTLING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Tearing down the Department of Education

On March 20, 2025, President Trump signed the executive order "Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities," directing the Secretary of Education to work

toward closing the department. About **1,300 employees — roughly half the agency — were laid off** in March 2025. A federal judge blocked the layoffs in May, but on July 14, 2025, the Supreme Court allowed them to proceed. The department cannot be abolished outright without Congress, but its capacity to enforce students' rights and distribute aid has been hollowed from within.

What Title I does, and what its loss would cost

Title I directs federal money to schools serving low-income children — about 63 percent of public schools, through roughly **13,000 school districts**, at a cost of $16 to $18.8 billion a year. (The earlier edition confused these numbers: 13,000 is the number of *districts* that receive Title I, not the number of teachers at risk.) The Center for American Progress estimates that eliminating Title I — as Project 2025 proposes — would cut roughly **180,000 teaching positions**, about 5.6 percent of the workforce, affecting some 2.8 million students.

Cutting school spending has measurable, unequal effects. A study by economists C. Kirabo Jackson, Cora Wigger, and Heyu Xiong found that a $1,000 per-pupil spending cut widens the gap in average test scores between Black and white students by about **6 percent**. (The earlier draft said "6 percentage points"; the study's language is "6 percent.")

Project 2025's education agenda, in its own words

Project 2025's *Mandate for Leadership* is explicit. It states that "the federal Department of Education should be eliminated." It calls for Title I to be "phased out" over "a 10-year period," with its

administration first transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services and then devolved to the states. It proposes universal education savings accounts and vouchers, calls for the Office for Civil Rights to be moved to the Department of Justice, and to "enforce only through litigation," and would rescind the Equity in IDEA rule that protects children with disabilities from discriminatory discipline. These are not paraphrases; they are the document's direct language.

The human rights violation

Article 26 guarantees that "everyone has the right to education" and that education "shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages." A deliberate plan to defund the schools that serve poor children, to dismantle the office that enforces the rights of disabled children, and to abolish the federal role in education altogether is a frontal assault on that right.

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- $1,000 cut widens Black–white test gap by ~6 percent — Education Next, "The Costs of Cutting School Spending"

- Project 2025 education quotes ("eliminated," Title I "phased out" over 10 years, OCR to DOJ, "enforce only through litigation") — Project 2025 Education Department chapter

CHAPTER 5: WHEN ABORTION BANS KILL MOTHERS AND INFANTS

The names

The earlier edition of this book relied on fictional patients. It does not need to. The victims of post-*Dobbs* abortion bans have names, documented by ProPublica in reporting recognized with the 2025 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

Josseli Barnica, 28, died of sepsis in Texas after doctors waited roughly 40 hours — until a fetal heartbeat stopped — to complete care for an inevitable miscarriage. **Nevaeh Crain**, 18, died after being turned away from care. **Porsha Ngumezi**, 35, and **Tierra Walker**, 37, also died in Texas. In Georgia, **Amber Nicole Thurman** and **Candi Miller** died after being unable to obtain timely care under that state's ban. In April 2026, the Texas Medical Board disciplined three doctors in connection with these cases.

What the data show

These are not isolated tragedies. Georgetown's Global Economy and Policy Initiative, analyzing CDC data, found that the maternal mortality rate in **Texas rose 56 percent** in the first full year of its abortion ban — including a 95 percent increase among white mothers — while the national rate rose only 11 percent over the

same period. Mothers in ban states faced nearly twice the risk of death; Black mothers in ban states were 3.3 times as likely to die as white mothers.

The mechanism is documentable. In Texas, the rate of sepsis among women hospitalized with second-trimester pregnancy loss rose more than 50 percent, from about 3 percent to 4.5 percent, after the ban. And the harm extends to newborns: across 14 ban states, researchers at Johns Hopkins found infant mortality about **6 percent higher** — roughly 478 excess infant deaths — with Black infant mortality up 11 percent.

Federal action to widen the harm

The administration did not merely inherit these bans; it acted to extend their reach. On June 3, 2025, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services rescinded the Biden-era guidance stating that the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) requires hospitals to provide emergency abortion care to stabilize a patient, removing a critical federal backstop for women facing life-threatening pregnancy complications. OBBBA also cut off Medicaid funding to Planned Parenthood for one year, stripping contraception and cancer screening from patients who rely on it.

The human rights violation

Article 3 guarantees the right to life. Article 25 declares that "motherhood... [is] entitled to special care and assistance." When the state's law forces a doctor to wait until a woman is dying before intervening, and when the federal government removes the emergency-care guarantee that might have saved her, the result

is not the protection of life. It is, as the death certificates attest, its loss.

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- Texas sepsis rate rose >50% for second-trimester loss — ProPublica, "Abortion Bans and Maternal Mortality"
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PART TWO: THE BETRAYAL OF ELDERS

The Foundation: A Promise Made, A Promise Broken

The Universal Declaration is one of the few founding human rights documents in the world that explicitly names old age. Article 25 guarantees "the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, **old age** or other lack of

livelihood." Article 22 establishes the right to social security. These words were written by a generation that had watched the Great Depression cast the elderly into poverty and had resolved that no civilized nation would let it happen again.

Older Americans built their lives around that resolve. They paid into Social Security and Medicare for forty and fifty years. They saved, they insured, they moved into continuing care communities on the understanding that the nation would honor its side of the bargain. The policies documented in this Part break that bargain — not through a single dramatic repeal, but through a hundred quieter subtractions: a staffing rule rescinded, a field office closed, a subsidy allowed to lapse, an agency dissolved. Each is defended as an efficiency. Together they amount to the systematic withdrawal of the security the Declaration promised the old.

CHAPTER 6: MEDICAID, LONG-TERM CARE, AND THE NURSING HOME

The truth most families don't learn until it's too late

Medicare does not pay for long-term nursing home care. It covers a skilled nursing stay only for a limited category of patients and for no more than 100 days in a benefit period. Private insurance generally does not cover nursing home care at all. So when an elder needs to live in a nursing home, the bill falls to the family until the family's savings are gone — and then to **Medicaid**, which is the primary payer for **63 percent of nursing home residents**. In 2023, Medicaid paid 44 percent of the nation's $147 billion institutional long-term care bill and 69 percent of home

care costs. Long-term-care beneficiaries are only 6 percent of Medicaid enrollees but account for 34 percent of Medicaid spending.

This is why the OBBBA Medicaid cuts, examined in Chapter 2 for their effect on children, carry special weight for the old. The same $1.04 trillion in combined Medicaid and ACA reductions that will cost children their coverage will also squeeze the financing of the nursing homes where their grandparents live. The law tightens eligibility by lowering the home-equity limit for long-term care assistance to $1 million, with no inflation adjustment and no state waiver, making it harder for a middle-class elder to qualify for the care they need. It cuts the provider taxes that nearly every state uses to finance nursing facility care. And by threatening home- and community-based services — which, unlike nursing home coverage, are optional for states — it risks pushing more frail elders out of their homes and into institutions just as those institutions lose funding.

The staffing rule that was rescinded after the checks cleared

In 2024, the previous administration finalized the first-ever federal minimum staffing standard for nursing homes: at least 3.48 hours of nursing care per resident per day, including registered-nurse and nurse-aide minimums, and a registered nurse on site 24 hours a day. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimated that 81 percent of facilities would have needed to hire more staff to comply.

On December 2–3, 2025, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services rescinded that rule in full, leaving no active federal

regulation implementing minimum nursing staffing requirements. The New York Times reported that the repeal followed industry donations and lobbying — its investigation was headlined "After Donations, Trump Administration Revoked Rule Requiring More Nursing Home Staff." The CBO had estimated the rule's elimination would "save" $23.1 billion over ten years. The savings come out of the care of the residents who will now be tended by fewer hands.

What understaffing does — a documented case

On July 1, 2026, the Massachusetts Attorney General announced a $2.75 million settlement with Bear Mountain Healthcare over conditions at eleven nursing homes. The Attorney General found that "nursing home executives collected hefty paychecks as they understaffed their Massachusetts facilities, leading to medication errors and life-threatening injuries to their patients." Residents "suffered pressure ulcers, renal failure, malnutrition, dehydration, obstructed catheters, and falls that broke bones. Some wandered away from Bear Mountain facilities, unsupervised." Owners reported annual salaries exceeding $350,000 while facilities failed to meet even the state's minimum staffing standard. This is the harm a federal staffing floor was designed to prevent — the floor that was just removed.

The human rights violation

Article 25 guarantees "medical care and necessary social services" and "security in the event of... old age." To make it harder for elders to qualify for the only coverage that pays for their care, to cut the financing of the facilities that house them, and to rescind

— after industry donations — the one rule protecting them from dangerous understaffing, is to abandon the aged to precisely the insecurity the Declaration was written to prevent.

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CHAPTER 7: THE AUTOMATIC CUTS COMING FOR MEDICARE

A cut triggered by arithmetic

The administration insists it did not cut Medicare. Technically true — and beside the point. Because OBBBA increases the federal deficit so sharply, it triggers automatic across-the-board cuts under the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, a law that requires the White House budget office to "sequester" spending when legislation raises deficits. Medicare is not exempt.

The CBO's official estimate is precise. OBBBA increases deficits by **$3.4 trillion over the 2025–2034 period**. Under the PAYGO law, that triggers a Medicare cut capped at 4 percent — an estimated **$45 billion in fiscal year 2026 alone**, growing to $76 billion in 2034, and totaling roughly **$491 billion over 2027–2034** unless Congress acts to waive it. The Kaiser Family Foundation summarizes the effect as about $500 billion in mandatory Medicare reductions between 2026 and 2034, including a 4 percent cut to hospital payments. When hospitals that serve Medicare patients lose 4 percent of their payments, the consequences — service closures, longer waits, rural hospital failures — land on the beneficiaries.

The one place the news is better

Not every development harmed seniors. The administration continued, rather than cancelled, the Medicare drug-price negotiations created by the Inflation Reduction Act. Its second round covered 15 drugs, including the widely used semaglutide (Ozempic and Wegovy), at prices CMS said represent 44 percent

savings, effective January 2027. The first round's negotiated prices take effect in 2026, estimated to save $1.5 billion in beneficiary out-of-pocket costs, and the Part D out-of-pocket cap fell to $2,000 in 2025. But even here OBBBA cut against seniors: it expanded the "orphan drug" exclusion, exempting more drugs from negotiation, which the CBO estimates could cost Medicare nearly $5 billion in lost savings over the decade. And Project 2025 calls outright for repealing the Inflation Reduction Act and its drug-price controls.

Privatization by default

Project 2025 proposed making private Medicare Advantage the *default* form of Medicare. In March 2026, a senior CMS official confirmed the agency was studying models that would automatically enroll beneficiaries into private Medicare Advantage plans or accountable care organizations, rather than the traditional Medicare that currently covers anyone who makes no active choice. Advocates warn this would erode the traditional program that millions of seniors prefer for its broader choice of doctors.

The human rights violation

Article 22's right to social security and Article 25's guarantee of medical care in old age are not honored by a law that swells the deficit and then lets an automatic formula carve half a trillion dollars out of Medicare. The cut is disguised as arithmetic, but its victims are the 68 million Americans who depend on the program.

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CHAPTER 8: DISMANTLING SOCIAL SECURITY FROM THE INSIDE

Gutting the agency that mails the check

The Social Security Administration serves 73 million people. In 2025, under the direction of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), the agency announced it would cut its workforce by more than 12 percent — a staffing target of **50,000, down from about 57,000**, a loss of roughly **7,000 jobs** — even though its staffing was already at the lowest level in decades relative to the people it serves. It moved to cut its regional offices from **10 to 4**, and DOGE published a list of **47 field offices** slated for closure across some 24 states — closures the Urban Institute warned would fall hardest on rural and tribal

communities, where around 6 million seniors already live 45 miles or more from an office.

The service collapse was immediate and documented: website crashes, hours-long call waits, and long lines. Staff described "complete, utter chaos" and warned of a "death spiral." A former commissioner warned the cuts could cause "system collapse and an interruption of benefits" within 90 days. When DOGE's technology team deployed new software without adequately testing it against real user volumes, many of the 7.4 million recipients of Supplemental Security Income received messages saying they were "currently not receiving payments."

The living declared dead

The cruelest failures were individual. **Leonard "Ned" Johnson**, 82, of Seattle, was mistakenly declared dead by the SSA in February 2025 amid DOGE's activity in the agency's "death master file." His bank sent his wife a condolence letter and clawed back $5,201 in benefits; his February and March payments stopped; his Medicare was cancelled; his credit was flagged as belonging to a dead man. He spent nearly eight hours at a Seattle Social Security office, passport in hand, trying to prove he was alive. A DOGE staffer had begun analyzing the death file on February 13; five days later, Ned Johnson was "dead."

He was not alone. **Richard VanMetter** was added to the death file in February 2025, locked out of his bank account, stripped of his last Social Security check and his Medicare, and left months later still fighting to restore his pension. **Renee Williams** of West Philadelphia — very much alive — had her bank accounts, health

insurance, and retirement benefits terminated after being entered as deceased. The SSA acknowledges that roughly 600 living people are erroneously added to the death database each month — about 9,000 to 10,000 a year. Elon Musk's claims of massive fraud that justified the DOGE incursion were, per the Associated Press and the agency's own inspector general history, "greatly exaggerated": improper payments ran at less than 1 percent of benefits.

The clock, moved forward

Meanwhile the program's finances worsened. The Social Security Trustees now project the retirement (OASI) trust fund will be depleted in the **fourth quarter of 2032**, at which point only 78 percent of scheduled benefits would be payable. The chief actuary reported that OBBBA itself — by reducing the taxation of benefits — **accelerated depletion from 2033 to 2032**.

The "senior bonus" that isn't what it sounds

OBBBA created a new deduction of up to **$6,000 for taxpayers 65 and older**, for tax years 2025 through 2028. It was widely promoted as ending taxes on Social Security benefits. It does not. As tax analysts note, "the long-standing rule that up to 85 percent of Social Security benefits may be taxable remains in place." The deduction is temporary, phases out for higher incomes, does nothing for the lowest-income seniors who already owe no tax, must be actively claimed, and expires after 2028.

What Project 2025 does and does not say

Fairness requires precision here. Project 2025's *Mandate for Leadership* does **not** itself propose cutting Social Security; independent fact-checks confirm this. But the Heritage Foundation, which authored Project 2025, separately advocates raising the retirement age to 69 or 70, and the House Republican Study Committee — representing about 80 percent of House Republicans — proposed in its budget to raise the full retirement age to 69, a change the Center for American Progress calculates would cut benefits for nearly three-quarters of Americans. Heritage and the RSC also promote "chained CPI," which would shrink annual cost-of-living increases for seniors.

The human rights violation

Article 22 guarantees the right to social security; Article 25 guarantees security in old age. To slash the workforce that administers those benefits, to close the offices where elders go for help, to wrongly declare thousands of living people dead and cut off their income, and to move up the date the trust fund runs dry — this is the dismantling of the single most important anti-poverty program for the aged, carried out administratively, without a vote to end it.

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CHAPTER 9: PRICING OLDER ADULTS OUT OF HEALTH INSURANCE

The subsidy cliff returns

Americans between 50 and 64 — too young for Medicare, often retired early or self-employed — depend heavily on the Affordable Care Act marketplaces for coverage. The enhanced premium tax

credits that made those plans affordable expire at the end of 2025, and OBBBA did not extend them. Because ACA rules allow insurers to charge older adults up to 3 times more than younger adults, older enrollees face the steepest increases.

The Kaiser Family Foundation's figures are stark. In 2026, a **64-year-old** just above the subsidy cliff (at 401 percent of the federal poverty level, about $62,700 in income) "could pay more than **$11,000 more annually**." A 60-year-old would pay nearly $9,600 more; a 40-year-old, $4,500 more; a 21-year-old, about $838 more. The burden rises sharply with age, precisely because the oldest pre-Medicare adults are charged the most. Marketplace insurers proposed median premium increases of 18 percent for 2026 on top of the subsidy loss. The CBO projects the number of uninsured will rise to 16 million when the subsidy expiration is combined with OBBBA's other cuts.

The human rights violation

Article 25 guarantees "medical care" as part of an adequate standard of living. To let the subsidies lapse — knowing the design of the ACA age-rating would concentrate the pain on 60- and 64-year-olds, adding $11,000 a year to a retiree's premiums — is to price the near-elderly out of the coverage that stands between them and medical bankruptcy in the last years before Medicare.

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16M uninsured — KFF, "If Enhanced ACA Tax Credits Expire, Older Marketplace Enrollees Face Steepest Premium Hikes"; KFF, "Implications for Hospitals"

CHAPTER 10: STARVING THE SERVICES THAT KEEP ELDERS ALIVE AT HOME

Abolishing the agency for the aged

On March 27, 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services announced it would eliminate the **Administration for Community Living (ACL)** as a standalone agency, scattering its functions across other offices. ACL administers the Older Americans Act programs that most Americans never think about until they need them: congregate and home-delivered meals, in-home supports, senior centers, transportation, family caregiver support, and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program that investigates nursing home abuse. Forbes described ACL as the office that "oversees most federal assistance, aside from Medicaid and subsidized housing, for older adults living outside institutional settings."

More than **40 percent of ACL's staff were fired**, including its entire budget and grants teams and all 10 regional administrator positions; by July 14, 2025, nearly half of the roughly 200-person agency had been permanently terminated. When the agency that moves the money is dismantled, the programs that depend on it are left in limbo.

Meals on Wheels, left in limbo

Federal funding for the Older Americans Act Nutrition Program — which underwrites Meals on Wheels and community senior meals — was cut in fiscal 2024 for the first time in more than a decade and has remained flat, producing widespread unmet need and growing waitlists. About 37 percent of funding for local nutrition programs flows through Meals on Wheels America from Older Americans Act money — the very money ACL was dismantled while administering. Trump's FY2026 "skinny budget," released May 2, 2025, proposed a 26 percent cut to HHS and the elimination of programs including the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, which provides monthly food boxes to low-income seniors.

The heating-assistance staff, fired en masse

On April 1, 2025, the administration fired the **entire federal staff** — about 25 people — responsible for the $4.1 billion Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which helps roughly **6.2 million** households, many of them elderly, pay heating and cooling bills. With no staff to administer it, allocated funds froze. The administration's FY2026 budget proposed eliminating LIHEAP entirely. Congress ultimately restored the program's funding in the enacted FY2026 bill — but the episode showed how close the safety net came to snapping, and it left seniors uncertain through a winter whether help would come.

The human rights violation

Article 25 guarantees "food," "housing," and "necessary social services," as well as security in old age. Meals on Wheels, senior nutrition, heating assistance, and the ombudsman who guards against nursing-home abuse are the concrete forms those words take in an old person's life. To abolish the agency that runs them, flatten their funding, and fire the staff who administer them is to strip away the daily supports that let elders live with dignity at home.

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- Entire ~25-person LIHEAP staff fired Apr. 1, 2025; ~6.2M served; funds froze; later restored by Congress — New York Times, Apr. 2, 2025; Sen. Schumer, LIHEAP funding restored

PART THREE: OUR FUTURE

The Foundation: The World We Leave Behind

Article 28 of the Universal Declaration is easy to overlook, but it is the article that holds the others together: "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized." The rights of children and elders do not survive in a vacuum. They require a livable planet, a functioning democracy, a government bound by law, a scientific enterprise that guards public health, and public finances that do not mortgage the future. This Part documents the assault on those foundations — the conditions under which every other right in the Declaration is either honored or lost.

CHAPTER 11: MORTGAGING THE PLANET

Walking away, on day one

On January 20, 2025 — his first day back in office — President Trump signed the executive order "Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements," directing the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement. The order also revoked the U.S. International Climate Finance Plan. Under the agreement's own rules, withdrawal takes effect one year after notification, placing the United States — the world's second-largest greenhouse-gas emitter — in the company of Iran, Libya, and Yemen as non-parties.

Removing the legal basis for climate regulation

The same day, Trump signed "Unleashing American Energy," directing agencies to expand fossil-fuel production and to pause disbursement of clean-energy funds, and "Declaring a National Energy Emergency," whose definition of "energy resources" pointedly excludes solar and wind. Then, on July 29, 2025, the EPA proposed to rescind the **2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding** — the scientific and legal foundation for all federal regulation of greenhouse gases. As the agency itself acknowledged, without that finding, "EPA lacks statutory authority under Section 202 of the Clean Air Act to prescribe standards for GHG emissions." The EPA simultaneously moved to repeal greenhouse-gas standards for vehicles and, in a separate June 2025 proposal, for power plants.

Ending the incentives, opening the refuge

OBBBA terminated or accelerated the sunset of the Inflation Reduction Act's clean-energy tax credits — the electric-vehicle credit ended for vehicles acquired after September 30, 2025; residential solar and efficiency credits ended after December 31, 2025 — a rollback that the Columbia Center on Global Energy Policy projects will cut U.S. electric-vehicle sales by more than 40 percent through 2030 and slow the addition of renewable power. In October 2025, the Interior Department opened **1.56 million acres** of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain to oil and gas leasing.

Silencing the science

On April 28, 2025, the administration dismissed all roughly **400 authors** of the congressionally mandated Sixth National Climate Assessment. The proposed FY2026 budget for NOAA called for **$0 for climate research**, eliminated the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, and would cut more than 2,000 NOAA staff.

The human rights violation

Article 25's right to health and Article 28's right to an order in which rights can be realized both depend on a stable climate. The children in Part One and the grandchildren they will raise will inherit the consequences of a decade of accelerated emissions, dismantled science, and abandoned commitments. Intergenerational justice is not a slogan; it is the recognition that a right delayed to the next generation can be a right destroyed.

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CHAPTER 12: THE ASSAULT ON THE VOTE

An executive order over elections

In March 2025, Trump issued an executive order asserting presidential control over significant aspects of federal elections — mandating documentary proof of citizenship to register using the federal form, directing federal agencies to access state voter files, and acting against states that count mail ballots received after Election Day. As the Brennan Center noted, "the Constitution gives power over federal elections to the states and Congress, not to the president."

The courts agreed. **Three federal courts blocked** the order's key provisions; in the cases challenging the demand for state voter files, all nine courts to rule rejected the Justice Department's claims. A second election order in March 2026 — which would have the Postal Service refuse to deliver ballots from voters not on new approved lists — was likewise challenged in court. Still, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division collected voter-registration data from at least **24 states** and discussed transferring that sensitive data to Homeland Security Investigations for immigration and criminal probes.

Project 2025's blueprint for the vote

Project 2025's *Mandate for Leadership*, in its Justice Department chapter, calls for reassigning the prosecution of civil rights voting violations under 18 U.S. Code § 241 from the Civil Rights Division to the Criminal Division — a change the Brennan Center describes as stripping the division that protects voters of its core authority. The SAVE Act, which would require documentary proof of citizenship to register nationwide, passed the House twice (April 2025 and February 2026) but repeatedly failed in the Senate, blocked in June 2026 when four Republicans joined Democrats.

The human rights violation

Article 21 guarantees the right to take part in government through "periodic and genuine elections" by "universal and equal suffrage." An attempt to seize federal control of elections, to demand citizenship papers that millions of eligible voters cannot readily produce, and to repurpose voter data for immigration enforcement strikes at the foundation of self-government. That the courts blocked much of it is a measure of the danger, not proof of its absence.

References

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- SAVE Act passed House (220–208 Apr. 2025; 218–213 Feb. 2026), failed Senate June 2026 — Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, legislative history

CHAPTER 13: THE RULE OF LAW UNDER STRAIN

Spending the money — or not — as the president alone decides

The Constitution gives Congress the power of the purse. In 2025 the administration repeatedly withheld funds Congress had appropriated. The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office found the administration violated the Impoundment Control Act of 1974 in multiple cases — withholding $5 billion in electric-vehicle-infrastructure grants, freezing library and FEMA disaster funds, and illegally impounding National Institutes of Health money by canceling more than 1,800 grants already awarded. By late 2025, the GAO had identified at least six to eight violations and was pursuing dozens more investigations, even as the White House budget director publicly disputed the law's constitutionality.

Firing the watchdogs

On the night of January 24, 2025, Trump fired at least **17 inspectors general** by a two-sentence email, without the 30-day notice to Congress the law requires. On September 24, 2025, a federal judge ruled the firings unlawful — "He did not first notify Congress, and he did not provide any rationale" — though the

court declined to reinstate them. The administration went on to fire at least four more.

Punishing the lawyers

Trump issued executive orders targeting four major law firms — Perkins Coie, Jenner & Block, WilmerHale, and Susman Godfrey — that had represented clients or causes he opposed. Federal judges struck them all down; one called the orders "doubly violative of the Constitution." In March 2026, the Justice Department dropped its appeals, acknowledging the unanimous rulings that the orders breached "essential constitutional principles."

Soldiers in the streets

In June 2025, Trump federalized the California National Guard and deployed Marines to Los Angeles over the governor's objection during immigration protests. On September 2, 2025, a federal judge ruled the deployment violated the Posse Comitatus Act — the law barring the use of the military for domestic law enforcement — and enjoined the use of troops for arrests, searches, and crowd control. An appeals court largely affirmed in December 2025.

Reclassifying the civil service

On January 21, 2025, Trump revived "Schedule F" — renamed Schedule Policy/Career — reclassifying career civil servants into at-will status. The Office of Personnel Management estimated about **50,000 positions** would ultimately be affected, and a June 2026 order reclassified about 8,000 employees who can now be fired "without providing justification," converting a professional,

nonpartisan civil service into one that serves at the president's pleasure.

The human rights violation

Articles 8, 10, and 11 guarantee an effective remedy, a fair and public hearing, and due process; Article 21 guarantees equal access to public service. A government that spends or withholds money in defiance of Congress, fires the watchdogs who guard against corruption, punishes lawyers for representing disfavored clients, puts soldiers on city streets, and purges the professional civil service is dismantling the structures on which every other right depends. That courts and the GAO repeatedly found these actions unlawful is the system defending itself, but a system forced to defend itself this often is a system under siege.

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CHAPTER 14: BREAKING THE ENGINE OF SCIENCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Canceling the research

Over 2025, more than **7,800 federal research grants were canceled or suspended** — 5,844 at the National Institutes of Health and 1,996 at the National Science Foundation — with roughly 2,600 still not reinstated, totaling $1.4 billion in unspent funding. The administration proposed cutting NIH by about 40 percent, NSF by 57 percent, and NASA's science programs by 47 percent; Congress ultimately imposed far smaller cuts, but federal science agencies still lost about 20 percent of their staff in 2025 — an exodus of more than 25,000 people.

Firing the vaccine experts, and the measles that followed

On June 9, 2025, HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. fired **all 17 members** of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices — the panel that sets national vaccine recommendations. The public-health consequence was swift. The United States recorded **2,289 confirmed measles cases in 2025, with three deaths** — the highest tally in more than three decades — and by early July 2026 had already logged another 2,170 cases. For comparison, 2024 saw only 285 cases.

The brain drain

A Nature poll of about 1,650 U.S.-based scientists in March 2025 found **that 75 percent were considering leaving the country because of disruptions** to science. U.S. researchers submitted 32 percent more job applications abroad in early 2025 than the year before, and new international student enrollment at U.S. universities fell 17 percent, with the vast majority of institutions citing visa concerns.

The human rights violation

Article 27 guarantees the right "to share in scientific advancement and its benefits"; Article 25 guarantees health. To cancel thousands of research grants, drive a generation of scientists abroad, fire the nation's vaccine advisors, and preside over the worst measles outbreak in thirty years is to forfeit both — and to endanger the children of Part One most of all, since it is they who catch the diseases and they who will inherit the diminished science.

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CHAPTER 15: THE DEBT WE HAND OUR GRANDCHILDREN

$3.4 trillion, added

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will increase federal budget deficits by **$3.4 trillion over the 2025–2034 period**. Earlier versions of the score ran from about $2.4 trillion to nearly $2.8 trillion when debt-service costs were included; the $3.4 trillion figure is the CBO's estimate for the law as enacted.

There is a bitter symmetry here. The same law that cuts Medicaid for children and elders, slashes food assistance, and triggers automatic Medicare cuts also adds trillions to the national debt — much of it to finance tax cuts weighted toward the top. The safety net is cut *and* the debt grows. The bill is paid twice: once by the children and elders who lose their benefits now, and again by the grandchildren who will service the borrowing later.

The human rights violation

Article 22's right to social security and Article 28's right to a sustainable social order are both threatened by a fiscal path that mortgages the future while dismantling the present-day supports of the vulnerable. Debt itself is not a human-rights violation; borrowing to cut the safety net while enlarging the burden on generations not yet born is a moral choice — and, measured

against the Declaration's concern for the security of all, a damning one.

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CHAPTER 16: PROJECT 2025 AND AGENDA 47 — SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Throughout this book, care has been taken to attribute policies accurately, because the difference between Project 2025 and Agenda 47 matters — and because overstating the case would undermine it.

Project 2025 is a Heritage Foundation–led presidential transition program, first released in April 2023, built around a **920-page policy blueprint titled *Mandate for Leadership***. It lays out detailed plans to consolidate power in the White House across more than 30 federal agencies, and it was assembled by the Heritage Foundation together with a team that included several veterans of Trump's first administration. It is a governing manual, not a campaign document.

Agenda 47 is a different thing: it is Donald Trump's own official policy platform for the 2024 presidential campaign, published on his campaign website beginning in 2022 as a series of videos and

statements. It is separate from Project 2025 — and during the 2024 campaign, after Project 2025 drew criticism, Trump publicly attempted to distance himself from the Heritage Foundation's blueprint.

The distinction is not merely academic. During the campaign, Trump disavowed Project 2025. In the office, his administration has implemented it. As of February 2026, a joint analysis by the Center for Progressive Reform and Governing for Impact found that the administration had **initiated or completed 53 percent of Project 2025's domestic administrative agenda — 283 of 532 recommended actions — across 20 agencies** in its first twelve months. The blueprint the candidate disowned has become, in large measure, the record of the president.

Where this book attributes a policy to Project 2025, it quotes the *Mandate for Leadership* directly. Where it describes an enacted policy, it cites the executive order, the law, or the court ruling. Where a claim commonly attributed to Project 2025 is not actually in the document — as with cutting Social Security — this book says so plainly. Accuracy is not a concession to the other side. It is the discipline that makes the rest of the indictment credible.

References

- Project 2025: Heritage-led, released April 2023, 920-page *Mandate for Leadership*, 30+ agencies — Center for Progressive Reform, "One Year of Project 2025"; USA Today
- Agenda 47: Trump's official 2024 campaign platform, separate from Project 2025; Trump distanced himself from Heritage — USA Today

- 53% (283 of 532 actions) implemented across 20 agencies by Feb. 2026 — Center for Progressive Reform; PBS NewsHour

CONCLUSION: DID WE COME THIS FAR?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written by people who had seen what a government can do when it decides that some human beings matter less than others. They wrote thirty articles to name the things no government should be permitted to take away: a child's freedom from torture, a family's right to stay together, a mother's right to medical care, an old person's right to security, everyone's right to vote, to a fair hearing, to food and shelter and health, to a livable world.

Measured against those articles, the record documented in this book is not a series of policy disagreements. It is a pattern. Children were separated from their parents and held for six months. A million children are losing food assistance. The nursing-home staffing rule was rescinded after the industry's checks cleared. Living elders declared dead and cut off from their income. The agency for the aged was abolished, its meals-and-heating staff fired. The planet's protections stripped away. The vote was placed under siege. The watchdogs fired, the lawyers punished, the soldiers sent into the streets. The scientists were driven out, and the measles let back in. And $3.4 trillion in debt handed to the grandchildren, alongside the wreckage of the programs that were supposed to protect them.

The two groups that suffer first and worst are the two least able to defend themselves: the very young and the very old. That is not an accident of policy. It is a revelation of priorities.

But this book ends where the Declaration began — with the insistence that these rights are inherent, equal, and universal, and that they cannot be lawfully withdrawn. The courts that blocked the election order, struck down the law-firm orders, and found the impoundments and inspector-general firings unlawful were not partisans; they were the machinery of a constitutional order defending itself. The advocates, journalists, and researchers cited on every page of this book — the ProPublica reporters who named the mothers who died, the state attorney general who held the nursing home to account, the GAO analysts who counted the violations — are the reason this record exists at all.

The elders in the retirement community café remember when America presented itself to the world as the guardian of these principles. They remember because many of them helped make it so. The question that haunts them — *Did we come this far, only to turn our backs now?* — is not rhetorical. It is a call. The rights in the Declaration survive only when people insist on them. That insistence, from a granddaughter's video message to a courtroom filing to a book like this one, is the work that remains.

References

- Full text of the thirty articles — UN, Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- 2025 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service to ProPublica for reporting on maternal deaths under abortion bans — ProPublica reporting

This book is a work of documented nonfiction. The individuals named in it — Carlos, the Colombian family of five, Josseli Barnica, Nevaeh Crain, Porsha Ngumezi, Tierra Walker, Amber Nicole Thurman, Candi Miller, Leonard "Ned" Johnson, Richard VanMetter, and Renee Williams — are real people whose experiences were reported by the news organizations cited alongside their stories. Every statistic and policy description carries an in-line reference to its primary or authoritative source. Figures are current as of mid-2026.